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Fabric....

CHOICE COUNTS

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Fabric is the backbone of a costume. It is a tool used by the costume designer to create a thing of beauty.

Wise choice of fabric can make the difference between an ordinary or a distinctive looking outfit.

Wise choice depends on developing a sensitivity to the personality of a fabric. Fabric personality is determined by the way it looks, feels and drapes, or can be handled.

These factors affect how the fabric is used, its becomingness to the person, and how it can be styled.

SELECT FABRICS FOR A SPECIFIC USE

Seasonal wear -- wool coating for winter warmth, sheer cotton for summer coolness.

Sports -- durable denim, seersucker, stretch, tweed.

Travel -- packable jerseys and knits, wrinkle-resistant blends.

Street or business -- wool or cotton suitings, fabric that adapt to a tailored silhouette.

Afternoon dress and cocktail hour -- dressy sheer wools, silk crepes, shantung.

Evening -- elegant chiffon, brocade, beaded fabric.

SELECT FABRIC FOR BECOMINGNESS

In relation to skin--

Delicate silks and dainty pearls harmonize with fine textured skin.

A well designed printed fabric:

Has shapes or motifs that are interesting in contour and arranged in a pleasing rhythmic pattern. The motif might be inspired by geometric form such as a square, a natural form such as a leaf, or an inanimate form such as a car.

Has motifs that are harmonious in shape, size and idea (unity with variety).

Has background spaces that also are interesting.

Has stylized (rather than strictly realistic) designs that are suitable for wearing.

Has beautiful color tones in which light and dark values are used in satisfying amounts.

SELECTING FABRIC IN THE SHOP

Hold the fabric up vertically as it will be worn on the body. Check the bulkiness and size of design motifs in relation to the figure. Notice the placing and repeat of the design motifs.

Line movement, such as vertical, horizontal or diagonal, may be created by the motif. Consider this in relation to the figure.

Look at the fabric from a distance; notice the way the colors blend. Ask yourself these questions:

Is it a suitable fabric for the way you plan to use it? For the season, the occasion, the time of day?

Is it becoming in color, weight, texture and surface pattern?

Will it require a simple or a complicated style?

Can it be darted, seamed, or constructed effectively?

Will you need extra fabric for matching?

Is the printed or woven pattern well designed?

Does it have the fiber content, the quality, and care required that you want (read the label)?

Laces, soft crepes and sheer wools are kind to skin that is no longer young.

Shiny textures emphasize lines in the face. Very rough tweeds are also less flattering to skins.

In relation to figure, personality and fashion --

Hard, lustrous fabrics catch the light and make the figure appear larger and accent its outlines. Soft, lusterless fabrics appear to reduce size.

Bulky fabrics give the appearance of increased weight.

Soft, lightweight fabrics have the opposite effect.

The size of the design in a patterned fabric should be suited to the size of the person.

A dainty pattern is in scale with a dainty, petite person. A larger, more dashing person suggests a bolder pattern. However, a too definite pattern could make the person look too large.

Patterned fabrics that have small to medium sized motifs, compact spacing and have little contrast in light and dark colors produce a quiet effect and are flattering to most figures.

Blurred, all-over pattern effects, made of darker or grayed colors, decrease the apparent size of the wearer and camouflage figure outline.

Good taste, in the amount of emphasis in design of dress materials, varies not only with size and personality of the individual but also with the occasion for which it is planned and the changing fashion. A fashion fabric that may seem bold one year, may several years later appear less bold and more restrained.

SELECT FABRIC FOR EFFECTIVE STYLING

In relation to silhouette --

Crisp-tailored silhouettes that require trim and precise detailing are most effective if firm textures such as worsteds, twills, and linens are used.

Soft-tailored or dressmaker silhouettes require more pliable textures such as shantung, surrah or crepe.

Crisp-draped silhouettes, including circular cuts, bouffant and bustle styles, are best if made of taffeta, faille or net.

Soft-straight-draped or soft-hanging can be styled with crepe, jersey and chiffon.

In relation to balance of fabric and design --

The fabric and design should not compete for importance.

A fabric that is decorative or striking requires a simple style or garment design with few lines or details. A complicated style means a simple fabric that won't interfere with the effect you are trying to create.

In relation to a surface pattern --

Patterned fabrics can add spark to a costume. They can express personal taste and mood. They can be amusing, gay, smart or exotic. They usually look best when only one distinctive pattern is used in a costume.

This patterned effect may be in the form of prints, woven designs or other surface decoration.

The stronger the fabric pattern, with hard and definite outlines, the more difficult a styling problem it presents. Textured patterns where outlines are only a soft blur are almost as easy to handle in design as plain fabric. Strong geometrics and the more naturalistic patterns present problems that tax the most experienced designer. The geometrics, which include fabrics printed with a geometric design, plaids, checks and stripes, require careful planning and matching at seams.



SELECT A GOOD DESIGN IN PRINTED FABRIC

A special requirement of all patterned fabrics suitable for use in apparel design is that it be adaptable to use on three-dimensional forms. It is not used flat like wallpaper but must be molded around the body. It must retain its effectiveness when seamed, darted, gathered, pleated or draped. It must also look well on the body as it moves.